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What We Do in the Shadows

Rubina Ramji

Cape Breton University, ruby_ramji@cbu.ca

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What We Do in the Shadows

Abstract

This is a film review of *What We Do in the Shadows* (2013), directed by Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement.

Author Notes

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. After serving as a Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group for the American Academy of Religion and then the steering committee, Rubina continues to serve on the Executive Committee for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion as President and is the Film Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*. Her research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration.

What We Do in the Shadows
(2013)
Directed by Taika Waititi, Jemaine Clement
Midnight

When one watches a vampire movie, it tends to be filled with blood and gore and screams. Needless to say, there is quite a bit of blood in this film,



but it's not your average horror flick: it's not really a horror film at all as you will laugh too much throughout it. *What We Do in the Shadows* is a mock documentary, examining the lives of four very different vampires sharing a house in New Zealand. One does not often ponder how the undead live. If you could live forever, would it be in a lonely castle in Transylvania, or would you want to have a few mates to spend the evenings with, share meals and chores with, and go clubbing with every once in a while?

Given our propensity for companionship, it makes sense that vampires would like to have a few friends as well – immortality can become boring. Peter is the least social, being 8,000 years old. The other three flatmates, Viago (379 years old), Vladislav (862 years old) and Deacon (183 years old) try to maneuver through the modern world together. All four share characteristics we see in the average human: Vladislav is a lady's man, Deacon hates doing his chores and

Viago just wants everyone to get along well (and be cool). As an anonymous camera person follows these vampires around, documenting their daily lives, we become aware that immortality is not truly filled with power and indifference. These vampires yearn, love, suffer and mourn the passing of their “immortal” friends.

Much as we tend to view the “Other” as wholly separate from us, once we get past the stereotypes we tend to see those in the out-groups as being just like us. *What We Do in the Shadows* is a tale of humanity; even though some of us might become immortal, we all continue to share the same human traits, values and desires (it’s just that those who have become vampires have an added lust for blood). There are no rules or guidelines about how to live our lives. We choose our morals in life and live by them as closely as possible. These vampires give us a glimpse into the world of those who should be apart from us, yet who continue to be guided by the same set of morals and desires we all struggle to formulate and live by. *What We Do in the Shadows* is a comedic and yet sometimes sad film about friendship and loyalty, about fitting into a world that changes faster than we do, and the yearning to be loved.

— Ruby Ramji